

National WMU Executive-Director sets evangelism, discipleship challenge for Mississippi women

By Lindsey Williams
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Do children really listen when their RA and GA leaders communicate the Great Commission? Do teenagers really care when their Acteens directors plan a packing party for a community need? Do adult women really have time to think about anything beyond their overwhelming pile of family problems? WMU woman, do you ask yourself, *“Does this really make a difference?”*

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive-director of the national Woman’s Missionary Union, would answer these question with a resounding “Yes!” As she spoke to the monthly First Tuesday mission gathering at First Church, Jackson, on Jan. 7, Wisdom-Martin related that she herself is a result of God working through WMU women.

In a tiny country church in southern Illinois, a daughter of an underground coal miner and a foundry worker crossed her t’s and dotted her i’s as well as any other little girl around her. No one in her family had ever gone to college, and as far as she knew, life consisted of whatever happened in her small town. But when church ladies with big smiles and worn Bibles began to teach her about foreign countries, and better yet, what *God* was accomplishing in those faraway lands, Sandy’s world grew larger and larger and larger, and her relationship with Christ grew closer and closer and closer.

“Sandy is a servant leader,” said Cindy Townsend, Minister of

WMU and WEM at First Church, Jackson. "When you see the spotlight on her, you see her put the spotlight on Jesus. She works behind the scenes in ways only Jesus knows, and she does it with great joy."

WMU is not a social club for Baptist ladies, rather it is a grassroots organization founded in 1888, made to equip believers for the Great Commission and support missions locally and overseas by promoting God's work to His people. The task begins with Preschool Mission Friends, carries on into Royal Ambassadors (RA's) and Girls in Action (GA's), then to Acteens, and to Women On Mission.

"Our goal," explained Wisdom-Martin, "is not to get people to come to a meeting once a week or once a month. Our goal is to help people spiritually develop toward a missional lifestyle."

In 2024, the WMU created a lot of noise in the Southern Baptist Convention exhibit hall and in the months leading up to the meeting. Every SBC entity was invited to the RA Derby racetrack at the WMU booth. Across the country, RA boys participate in similar competitions with their handmade "RA Racers" as a way to raise funds for missions.

"When we invited these men with seminary doctorates to participate," Wisdom-Martin recalled, "I thought, 'There's no way they're going to stand around and race these little cars...' But they not only did it, they did it with rallying excitement as they counted down each race. Guidestone won the race with IMB coming in second, but IMB also won because the winner gave a thousand dollars to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Yet even with all the hard work the SBC entities put into their RA Racers, the young RA boys still made better time than any of the SBC men did."

The year took a turn from celebration and fellowship, however, when devastating hurricanes affected the lives of millions of people. The WMU granted more than \$130,000 in Pure Water, Pure

Love grants in the aftermath of the season. When Send Relief made a call, the WMU gave them enough money to purchase two 7,000-gallon tanker trucks and rent two more in addition to those. Because of God's compassion working through His people's generosity, Send Relief was able to store and distribute an equivalent of a quarter of a million bottles of clean water at a time.

Another project which got the Baptist world talking was the Cooperative Program (CP) Houseboat. To promote and celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 2025, last year the WMU built a houseboat made of almost three quarters of a million popsicle sticks, colored by 9,000 children across the nation, to demonstrate how the gifts of Southern Baptist churches make significant missional efforts come to fruition.



National Woman's Missionary Union executive-director Sandy Wisdom-Martin floats on the Cooperative Program Houseboat made entirely of popsicle sticks. (Photo credit: National WMU)

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“How the houseboat idea came into play was that, in November, the missionaries we studied about lived in a floating house in Brazil. So we had children from all over the States send in these little platforms put together with a row of popsicle sticks. Then teams from Illinois and Texas helped assemble the boat, and it was a lot fun.

“What’s even more special, is that the SBC entities and the missionaries we studied about from Brazil also sent in popsicle stick platforms. The missionaries also sent a Brazilian flag and platforms their people group made. They used this project as a way to teach their people group about sharing the Gospel with another people group. So I want to give a big thank you to the RA and GA leaders who led your children to be a part of this, because your sticks were on that boat.”

With a year ahead full of opportunities to serve the Lord with open hands and open hearts, Wisdom-Martin challenged the churches across the nation, "My heart beats WMU. You know the influence that WMU had on me growing up. We do many things well in WMU, but I know we could do evangelism and discipleship better. We have members who are baptized in our church, married in our church, who are buried in our church, who go their entire life without once sharing their faith, and we are all called to make disciples of Jesus.

"This is why I'm going to be championing a project for discipleship and evangelism from now until the time that Jesus calls me home. God dropped something in our lap when the publisher of the Readable Bible wanted to get the Gospel of John in the hands of everyone possible. He told us, 'I love WMU, and if you will do this, we will give you the rights to publish the Gospel of John in the Readable Bible for free.' WMU is going to pilot something called Good News Sunday: two weeks before Easter, we'll be inviting churches to give away the Gospel of John."

The Readable Bible is a conservative, word-for-word translation similar to the NASB, with a formatting and font selected for easier reading. The idea is for believers to give away multiple books and invite unbelieving friends, coworkers, family, or strangers to their church's Easter service with a phrase as simple as: "Easter is almost here. I got you this gift edition of *The Good News According to John*. It tells the whole story." If a church of 100 people hands out 5 books each, 500 people will be invited to see and hear Who Jesus is.

Wisdom-Martin went on to share about the second half of the project, "Last year, again, God dropped something in our lap: the authors of *50 Steps with Jesus* invited us to partner with them. *50 Steps with Jesus* is a 50-day journey for new believers. Why do we expect when people come to church and accept the Lord, that they're ready to walk with Him without someone teaching them? With *50 Steps with Jesus*, all we're

trying to accomplish is to pour into someone else. The relational knowledge of God you experienced when you came to faith, we want for other believers.”

50 Steps with Jesus is one resource with two sections: the first is for “the lamb,” the new believer, and the second for “the shepherd,” the more experienced believer. Every shepherd is challenged to commit to walk beside a new believer for 50 days, working through each lesson and talking together by phone or in person, if possible. Once a week, the two men or two women have a face-to-face meeting on days known as the “Big Steps.” The workbook helps its readers understand Jesus’ love for them, how to be conversational in prayer, how to study God’s Word, how to be active in the local church, and many other significant lessons.

“If you think, ‘I could never disciple anyone,’ this resource makes discipleship so incredibly easy,” said Wisdom-Martin. “Each lesson takes about 20 minutes together, and the section for shepherds offers all the guidance you need. What I really like about this new edition which puts both sections into one workbook, is that once a new lamb completes the 50 days, we say, ‘Congratulations, now we invite you to turn the page and become a shepherd.’”

“I am so proud of the WMU women of Mississippi. You are big on literacy missions, big on mission campsites, and big on Christian Men and Women’s Job Corps. I pray Ephesians 3:20 over you, that God would do immeasurably more than we can offer or ask. I’m limited by what I think I can accomplish. But if I would pray for something and see the hand of God at work, I could be a part of something so much bigger than what I could accomplish alone, and so could you. That’s what I pray for all of WMU. If we could capture a heart for evangelism and discipleship, it would transform their lives as well as the lives they touch.”

For more information on the evangelism and discipleship

project, visit <https://wmu.com/about-wmu/contact/> for various contact information.

Visit <https://www.wmystore.com/50-steps-with-jesus> to purchase a copy of *50 Steps with Jesus*.